

Why Recycling Makes Cents

By TIFFANY FRANKE

For every ton of trash thrown into the garbage compactor pit at the transfer station, the town pays \$91. In an average week, the town produces 10 trailers' worth of trash, each weighing about 20 tons, to be shipped to the incinerator at Sea Mass in Rochester. At this rate, \$18,200 worth of taxpayers' dollars are spent on weekly garbage disposal, accumulating to nearly one million tax paying dollars yearly on garbage alone. "If people would only wake up and see what it's costing them, maybe they would make more of an effort to recycle," said dump manager Karen, called "Ski" by co-workers.

Since recycling was introduced at the transfer station nearly 20 years ago, it's capacity has greatly grown, so that it now recycles nearly anything people would want to dispose of, said Ski, who worked as an equipment operator for five years before becoming foreman last year. "We are far ahead of a good number of towns," she added.

"I'd say I've seen an 82 percent improvement in the operation here...new sheds, better organization," said recycling manager, Glen Ghidoni. "Ski's brought it a long way, and now this is just about the best dump around."

Wednesday through Sun-

day from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., excluding major holidays, the station is open for registered vehicles to dispose of recyclable trash at designated areas on the grounds. Although all metal, glass, cardboard, paper, plastic, cans, bottles, compost, wood, foam, batteries, fluorescent lamps, mercury, microwaves, refrigerators, electronics, construction material, American flags, and books have designated recycling areas, "I'm getting a lot of people who are throwing these things away out of laziness," said Ski, "and it's not fair to other taxpayers." Not only is recycling an environmental and social responsibility, it is the law, said DPW Director Tom Daley. A sign over the trash pit reminds people that throwing away recyclables is a federal offense.

"If you have any questions, just ask us," said Ski who realizes that misinformation contributes to a general lack of recycling. Despite common lore, recyclables are never combined with the trash at the end of the day, making the effort to recycle always worthwhile. All cardboard is accepted (yes, even pizza boxes with minimal grease on them) except milk or ice cream cartons that contain wax. All junk mail, even envelopes with plastic windows, is accepted with magazines and newspapers in the

paper bin. American flags should never be thrown into the pit; members of the American Legion collect flags from their designated bin for a proper burning ceremony on Flag Day each year. And plastics? A new plastics machine, that will begin operating by the end of the month, will pulverize plastics 1-6 (most hard plastics) into 500 lb. solid blocks.

Daley is confident that funding for new machinery like this will save money in the long run. The previous plastic chipper system was more labor intensive, and only accepted plastics numbered 1-2. A new wood-waste tub grinder processed 1,664 tons of wood last year producing a net savings of \$113,000.

Although all trash thrown into the pit goes to Sea Mass, each recyclable is taken to a different location where the town may pay or be paid for its removal. "Depending on the demand of each item, the market is constantly changing drastically," said Daley. The Waste Management Company of Franklin currently pays the town \$25 per ton of white glass. Integrated Papers of Woburn pays the town for the removal of all papers. The disposal of recycled paints and oils by Clean Harbor, however, can be very costly. Ski encourages people disposing of latex paint to dry it out by

leaving the lid out or spreading it onto a plastic sheet and throwing it away, or leaving it for others to use. "People don't understand that what they may consider trash, others may consider useful," she said.

Although the dump offers thorough recycling, a lack of clear signage and organization can make the process confusing, admitted Ski. "The facility is currently not user-friendly," she said. "There's no traffic flow either, making the weekends especially crazy, but we're working on that." This is partly due to understaffing, noted Daley. Glenn Ghidoni, who has worked with the recycling program for 15 years, and equipment operator George Cook join Ski as the only three station employees, led by operations manager, Paul Balboni. Last year, the highway department worked \$40,000 of hours operating machinery at the dump. "That's just too much time," said Daley. "We need to have better quality control up there." Until the funds stop going into the pit with the trash, this will be difficult, said Ski.

To make the process easier, the staff encourages town members to plan ahead before coming to the dump. "Take the time to organize your vehicle and home center," said Ski. "It will be worth it in the long run."